

THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

CLOSE-UP REPORT

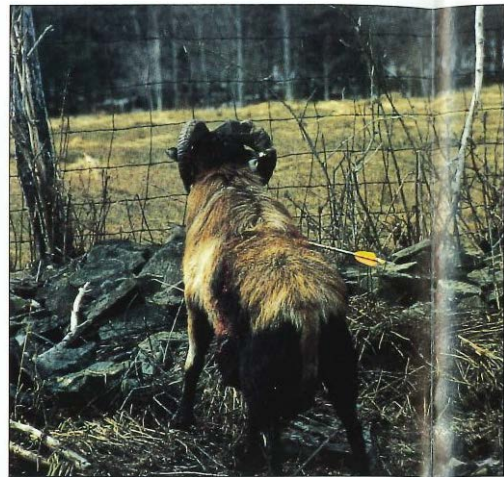
SEPTEMBER 1994

For three years The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has investigated a shocking horror that is spreading across the country: *canned hunts*, in which confined animals, unable to distinguish friend from foe, are heartlessly gunned down even as they may timidly approach the killer. Hunters pick their prey, pay the price, and laugh as they take aim.

The HSUS is determined to expose—and stop—this hideous commercial exploitation of living creatures. The following eyewitness account by an HSUS investigator is extremely graphic, but the truth must be told as the first step in building an awareness of the atrocity of canned hunts that will lead to an overwhelming demand for their eradication.

CANNED HUNTS— CANNED CRUELTY

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY EHLERS



THE ZOO CONNECTION

H SUS investigations have revealed that zoos across the nation have sold animals they consider surplus either directly to canned-hunting facilities or to dealers who sell animals to auctions patronized by canned-hunt organizers. Some zoos (including the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., and the San Diego Zoo) deny knowledge of the fate of their disposed-of animals. Other

Hunters in a canned hunt stalk a Corsican ram in a fenced enclosure and bring him down with arrows and bullets. The ram was shot more than six times.

supply of animals from zoos to canned-hunt operations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture disclaims responsibility, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, while it may become concerned if a hunt involves an endangered species, has actually issued a permit allowing a

zoos, such as the San Antonio Zoo, sell their animals openly. Even petting zoos have become part of the lucrative market created by canned hunting; the Catskill Game Farm in New York, a petting zoo that has purchased animals from the San Diego Zoo for decades, has sold animals directly to canned-hunt operations in Pennsylvania and Texas.

Baby animals are popular, so zoos keep breeding their animals. But space is limited, and at many zoos, for every baby born, an adult animal must go. Zoos also make money from the sale of animals—money that is too often literally blood money.

Zoos, and the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), must implement and adhere to strict breeding restrictions, including life-long plans for the humane maintenance of all offspring, or they must not breed at all. The supply of zoo animals to canned-hunting facilities could

end tomorrow if zoos would shoulder their responsibility to all of the animals under their care. ■

Security measures at canned hunts, and in the animal-supply pipeline to canned-hunt operations, often rival those of research labs. Outsiders are not welcome. It was thus with some fear that another HSUS investigator and I kept our appointment to view a canned hunt in a northern state.

We met our party at the hunting lodge. Inside, a group of hunters dressed in camouflage were watching instructional bow-hunting videotapes. Periodically, they stared out the window at an enclosure containing white-tailed deer; who stared right back at them.

Deer were not on the menu today. The two hunters we would accompany were out for Corsican ram. One would use a bow, the other a rifle.

After leaving the hunting lodge, the guide took us across the street and through a locked gate. We walked through a small wood and swamp to the hunting fields, which were enclosed pastures. An eight-foot wire fence kept the animals from the public road bordering the fields. A herd of grazing Corsican rams stood about fifty yards away from us, too far for the hunters we accompanied. The guide told the hunters to set up. Like a shepherd, he walked calmly behind the rams and pushed them toward the

hunters. The bow-hunter chuckled at the ease with which his prey was being brought to him and remarked, "I don't even consider this hunting." That didn't stop him, however, from turning to the animals and aiming his bow.

The first arrow flew and landed in a ram's rear, causing him to jump and briefly run. I figured this was a bad shot; I had always heard that experienced bow-hunters aimed for a quick kill. I soon deduced that the hunter's priority was not a quick kill; it was an intact upper body and head for his trophy. The hunter's apparent criterion in aiming was to avoid damaging the part of the animal he would hang on his wall.

He let two more arrows fly. One went into the ram's back, the other through a rear leg. I watched as the animal hopped away, the arrow in his leg scraping the ground. Two more arrows flew. They momentarily knocked him down, but since they were hind-end shots,

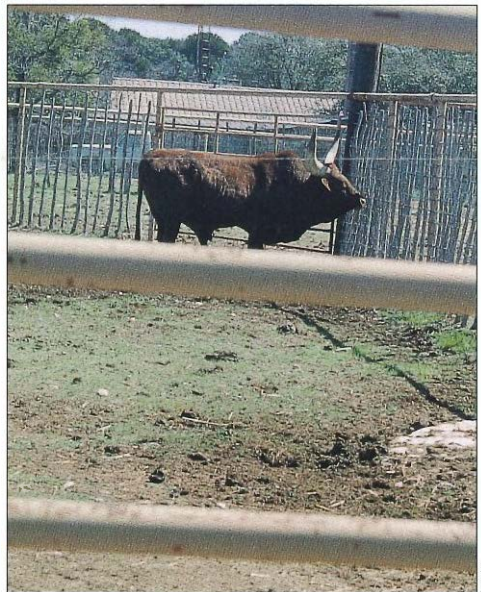
the ram was still full of life, even as his blood drained out. The ram ran to the fence, stopped, and gazed through the wire to the freedom that beckoned from the other side. He began to shake but still stood, four arrows sticking out of him (one had fallen out). Laughing, the hunter asked him to fall over on his right side, not his left, so he wouldn't break the arrows.

For five minutes we stood there, waiting for the quivering animal to fall. He refused to go

down but kept gazing through the fence. The hunter decided that one more shot, at close range, would do it. I watched as he fired a sixth arrow into the ram, and I prayed the animal would go down and end his misery. The poor creature barely reacted as the sixth arrow pierced his rear gut. He stood his ground, looking through the fence and shaking. Finally he fell. He thrashed about on the ground and repeatedly tried to stand. As I walked around him, he turned his head and looked into my eyes.

There was nothing I could do to help him. The hunt was legal, and I was an invited, unarmed guest on private property, surrounded by hunters with rifles and bows. I told myself that the information I was obtaining would help countless other animals in similar predicaments, but I couldn't avoid the gaze of the ram. When I close my eyes, I see it still.

The ram wouldn't die. Six arrows had pierced his hide and leg; still, he struggled to stand. The guide was hungry for lunch, waiting back at the lodge, and asked the bow-hunter to finish the job. Borrowing the other hunter's rifle, the bow-hunter took aim and shot the ram in his side from a distance of four feet. The ram continued to thrash about on



A lone Watusi bull stands in his pen at a canned-hunting facility. Animals purchased to be the victims of canned hunts may be shot in their pens or released into larger enclosures.

the ground, but he was losing blood fast. Five minutes later, as the shooter and guide were pulling the arrows from the ram and examining them for damage, we heard that final, long exhalation, as his lungs shut down. The ram was dead. The hunters and the guide laughed, posed for photos, and shook hands. "Nice shooting," the guide told the hunter.

PREPACKAGED SLAUGHTER

The poor ram who died that day was only one of thousands of animals who suffer gruesome deaths in similar scenarios across the country. Over the last decade, canned hunting has crept across the country; once limited to Texas, canned hunting can now be found in most states, and the HSUS investigation indicates there may be as many as several thousand canned-hunting facilities in the United States. From Hawaii to Montana, from Pennsylvania to Virginia, hunters may lay down their money, step into an enclosure, and kill, with virtually any type of weapon, almost any kind of animal: a boar, bear, zebra, buffalo, antelope—even a rhinoceros.

Canned hunting is nothing more than prepackaged slaughter. The animals used in canned hunts are confined by fences,

so they can easily be cornered, unable to escape. These animals—many of them hand-reared in zoos and on game ranches (see sidebar, "The Zoo Connection")—have grown accustomed to the presence of humans and commonly trot unsuspectingly in front of the hunter, expecting food. The instinct to flee, their greatest natural defense, has been replaced by trust—trust that is rewarded with a cruel and brutal death.

Appallingly, no federal laws restrict canned hunts or the



Black bears look for handouts from visitors to the Catskill Game Farm, a petting zoo in New York, which has sold animals directly to canned-hunting operations.

canned-hunt operator to make certain species of endangered deer a feature in his hunts! Nor are most states any better. Wisconsin and California are the only two that have laws governing canned hunts; the rest turn a blind eye to the canned cruelty within their borders.

THE HSUS AT WORK

This lack of regulation—and of widespread awareness—is one reason The HSUS is working so hard to expose canned hunting. During our three-year investigation we have amassed shocking evidence of the hidden horrors of canned hunts and the role zoos across the country play in providing animals to become the hunted. NBC's *Now* television program used HSUS footage and information in a segment it prepared on canned hunts that will help to spread the

word about these nightmarish events. We are working on state and federal levels to develop legislation to stop canned hunting. And we are pressuring the zoo community to acknowledge its responsibility for the animals it throws aside. This summer we invited zoo directors to meet with us in hopes of beginning a dialogue that would benefit animals; the response was chillingly negative. We must keep the pressure on, however, and that is one way *you* can help. Tell your local zoo that you won't be donating money to it or visiting unless it recognizes its *lifetime responsibility* for all the animals in its custody.

Canned hunts must be banned! A society that considers the hunting of penned animals a legitimate commercial activity cannot call itself civilized. ■



Grisly trophies adorn the walls of a canned-hunting facility's lodge. Outside, in fenced fields, a Dama gazelle awaits his fate. Will he, too, become a trophy?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Ask your local zoo to adopt a policy of *lifetime commitment* to all of the animals in its custody, whether purchased or bred by the zoo. Tell your zoo that you will not donate money or visit until it has such a policy. If your zoo refuses, contact your local media; tell them to contact The HSUS for more information on canned hunting.

- Call or write your senators and representative in Congress.



Ask them to support legislation that would end canned hunts. The Capitol switchboard number is (202) 224-3121. Address letters to The Honorable _____, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 (senators); The Honorable _____, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 (representative). If you do not know the names of your senators and representative, contact your local chapter of the League of Women

Voters or your city hall for the information.

- Be alert to the possibility that there are canned-hunt operations in your area. The HSUS investigation has located canned-hunt operations throughout the continental United States and in Hawaii. For help or for more information, contact The HSUS.

- Finally, assist The HSUS as it continues its investigation into and fight against canned hunting, and in its efforts to protect *all* animals from unnecessary pain and suffering. Please send your tax-deductible contribution in the enclosed postage-paid envelope today. Don't delay! The animals urgently need help. ■



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